

ARTS

Visual arts: Latinx art more than craft and pop culture, as shown in 'Diálogos' exhibit

Nancy Gilson Special to The Columbus Dispatch

Published 5:37 a.m. ET July 16, 2022

[View Comments](#)



In "ABC's" by Christian Casas, each letter of the Spanish alphabet represents an aspect of Cuban life. *Franklin Park Conservatory*

A variety of mediums and subject matter and overall excellence in artistry is on view in "Diálogos," an exhibit of work by seven Columbus-area Latinx artists.

Installed in the Cardinal Health Gallery at Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, the exhibit offers a snapshot of experiences and history from the origin countries of the artists – Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico and the United States.

"There's a huge tradition of fine art all over South America that Americans don't know about," said co-curator Eglé Gatins. "These are serious artists with track records."

Working with found objects and handmade dyes, [Christian Casas](#), a first-generation Cuban-American, created a large wall installation of alphabet squares in which each letter represents an aspect of Cuban life, ranging from F is for Fidel (Castro) to letters that stand for words describing Cuban people, geography and history. The installation is bold, colorful and informative.

Elsie Sanchez's "Entredos" and "Procession" are large, abstract oil paintings with layers of colors creating overall swirling patterns. The works can be viewed near and far, producing feelings of movement and hypnosis. Sanchez, born in Havana, Cuba, emigrated to the United States at the age of 9.

In her large black and gold woodcuts, [Eliana Calle Saari](#), who was born and grew up in Colombia, references life on a Caribbean island as well as Colombian history and culture, including [Gabriel Garcia Marquez's](#) "One Hundred Years of Solitude."

A Mexican tradition of animal and human portraits is reflected in Pedro Prieto Jr.'s black and white linocuts. Prieto was born in the United States to Mexican parents.



Eliana Calle Saari's "Mariposas Amarillas" reflects her Colombian heritage. *Franklin Park Conservatory*

Mabi Ponce de León, who describes herself as a transplanted South American (born in Argentina), visits Peru in her large map, a collage of acrylic and mixed media work on canvas. "I explore what it feels like to 'be' from two places and belong to neither," she writes in her statement.

The conquering Spaniards' quest for gold – and the cost to South America's indigenous people – is examined in the handmade paper works of Micaela de Vivero, who grew up in Ecuador. In "Oro no es/Gold, is it not?" she combines historical drawings with splashes of color including gold thread.

In the intriguing video installation "Chapultepec," titled for the huge park in Mexico City, Florence Gouvrit-Montano, who is based in Mexico City and Columbus, incorporates the recorded sounds of birds from the park with a light-colored, soothing visual of swaying trees.



Mabi Ponce de Léon visits Peru in this collage of acrylic and mixed media. *Franklin Park Conservatory*

Gatins' co-curator and fellow artist, [Elena Osterwalder](#), said that in addition to supplying artwork, each artist was asked to write about their work and how it feels to be a Latinx artist in Columbus. Their statements, available to visitors to the gallery, are rich with context for their works.

“Their work is beautiful in itself but if you read about it, there’s an added dimension,” Gatins said.

Gatin was born in France to French and Colombian parents and is an artist who works in painting, collage and mixed media. Osterwalder was born and raised in Mexico and came to the United States when she was 30. She is a painter, now working with natural dyes. The curators have been friends and colleagues for years and are passionate about spotlighting Latinx artists, calling those in the exhibit “established, high-quality artists.”

“A lot of people think of Latinx art as more craft, more pop culture. It can be that, but it can be much more. This is really fine art,” Gatin said.

negilson@gmail.com

At a glance

“Diálogos” continues through Nov. 20, in the Cardinal Health Gallery at Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, 1777 E. Broad St. Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission: \$22, \$19 senior citizens, \$15 ages 3 to 12, \$3 Museums for All card holders. Other discounts also are available. Call 614-715-8000 or visit www.fpconservatory.org.

[View Comments](#)

